Sylvester Bares Pentagon Cuban-Missile 'Lie'

NEW YORK, Nov. 6 (AP)—Arthur Sylvester, former Assistant Secretary of Defense, says a Pentagon statement during the Cuban missile crisis that it "has no information indicating the presence of offensive weapons in Cuba" was untrue.

"The man who issued the release did not know that," Sylvester said. "I did. I knew that some of the missiles were operational."

"Sometimes, and those times are rare indeed, Government officials may be required to fulfill their duty by issuing a false statement to deceive a potential enemy, as in the Cuban missile crisis," Sylvester said.

Sylvester was a center of controversy during his years as the Defense Department's public information officer after he was quoted as saying the Government had an inherent right to lie to save itself. His latest remarks are in an article entitled "The Government has the Right to Lie" in the Nov. 7 Saturday Evening Post.

In his article, Sylvester says it really is not the missile-crisis event that causes credibility problems.

"It is the problems created in the Vietnam war by the absence of censorship, and the presence of television that produce difficulties," Sylvester writes. "I have often wondered whether critics think we should have called a press conference on certain tense Vietnam situations.

"For example, early in 1964 . . . more than 600 Air Force F105 fighter planes were temporarily grounded due to deficiencies in their propulsion system. My guess is that if questions had been raised we would have taken the gamble and leveled with newsmen and asked them of lay off."